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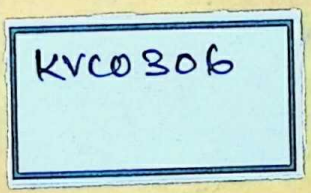
CHAFF AND GRAIN

BY

S. V. V.

AUTHOR OF

'SOAP BUBBLES' AND 'MORE SOAP BUBBLES'



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ESPLANADE, MADRAS

1934

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CHAFF AND GRAIN

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AUTHOR OF
'SOAP BUBBLES' AND 'MORE SOAP BUBBLES'

PRESENTED BY:
V. P. R. PL. M.
KASIVISWANATHAN CHETTIAR
PAGANERI.

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MADRAS:
THE HUXLEY PRESS
1934

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PRESENTED BY:
V. PR. PL. M.
KASIVISWANATHAN CHETTIAR
PAGANERI.

FOREWORD

BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

P.C., C.H., L.L.D.

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FOREWORD

This book is a trove. The owner invites you, good reader, to its riches. Come and take as much of it as you can. It will suffer no diminution and S. V. V. will feel all the happier.

You need no great intellectual outfit—no science, no theology, no debasing politics, no overpraised geography. But bring a simple heart, a child's capacity of innocent laughter. This however you must have. No price can buy it. No tuition can impart it. No prayer can win it. Without it, what can S. V. V. or any one do for you?

On my first voyage, I kept much to myself, not being a good mixer. After a week a European gentleman accosted me in a friendly manner and wished to ask me some questions. I was agreeable and the conversation was somewhat like this.

Do you smoke?
No.

Do you drink?
No.

Do you eat animal food?
No.

Do you play bridge?
No.

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Do you join the deck games?
No.

Do you bet on the Ship's run?
No.

Do you make love to the nice girls here?
No.

Then, why don't you throw yourself overboard? Well, that is one view of life. Mine was slightly different. So long as there was a cause to work for, bigger than one's self, friends to love and be loved, and beauties of nature and of art, one need not grudge one's days on earth.

Among the beauties of art, a book of humorous writing which does not hurt people's feelings or take away their reputations takes high rank, if not the highest. The joys it gives are pure and noble. Of course you must not give yourself wholly to them. Nor do I envy the person who makes his living by joking for others' amusement.

But I am straying, being old and garrulous. I was asked to introduce S. V. V.'s baby to the world. It is a superfluous office. Having done it, I ought not to be guilty of any more superfluity. Let me bow and retire.

Tirupur,
19—10—34.

V. S. Srinivasa Sastri.

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PREFACE

Inside these pages some may find chaff, and some may find grain. I have therefore modestly called this book, " Chaff and Grain." But, between ourselves, to be honest, the modesty is only assumed. I fancy I have packed it with pearls.

My wife one day came to me with our male offspring—aged one. " Say Appa, child, say Appa " she coaxed. ' Abu-r-r-r ' sang out the Infant Phenomenon.

" See, see, how wonderfully the child has picked up Appa. Padma's child is three years old, and has not yet learnt to articulate even one syllable " she said, filled with maternal pride.

Well, it was her child.

S. V. V.

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CHAFF AND GRAIN

RAO SAHIB SENGILIAN

I am very sorry for Mr. Sengilian. He is no doubt a District Board President, Rao Sahib, and all that. He shakes hands with Collectors, has interviews with them (of course, with the aid of an interpreter), rides in motor cars with Executive Councillors and Cabinet Ministers, taking them to this function and that, and carries his authority with great distinction and credit (thanks to his Head Clerk). He is incessantly voted into all sorts of chairs, and voted out of them with a profusion of garlands and protestations of undying gratitude "for his condescension in presiding over the function in spite of the various calls on his time, and the infirmity of his constitution." He is received on railway platforms by Taluk Board Presidents, Elementary School Masters

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and Vaccination Inspectors, each of whom has a garland to bestow on his over-worked neck, and sails along the platform followed by a large crowd. An extremely enviable and satisfying situation—Isn't it? But alas! there is a skeleton. Black care sits on the back of Mr. Sengilian's head and oftentimes he sighs, "had I remained the old Sengilian without these distinctions and honours, how happy, &c., &c.?" Ambition has extracted out of him a price out of all proportion to the satisfaction it has bestowed.

It would really seem easier to become a District Board President, or even a Cabinet Minister, than to become a Taluk Office Clerk. It is enough, in the former case, if you belong to the genus homo, and is not a certified lunatic. British Indian Constitution does not require more. But to become a Taluk Office Clerk, you ought at least to be a B. A. (First Class Hons. preferred). You should have passed the typewriting examination, preferably shorthand also. You have to satisfy the Medical Officer that you have Rs. 16 on your person, that you are of a certain height and

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weight, that your lungs are where they ought to be, that your appetite is good (a qualification which all the applicants possess in an excess degree), that you are not suffering from, and have no predisposition to, such maladies as jaundice, malaria, or sleeping sickness, that your heart is sound and not likely to break down under any sort of adverse circumstances, such as the contingency of your officer asking on paper why you should not be hanged by the neck till you are dead, for delaying a paper, and that all your organs are functioning properly so that proper and efficient discharge of your onerous duties as a Taluk Office Clerk may not unnecessarily be impeded. You have to produce testimonials from two respectable gentlemen that your character and conduct are as good as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's. You have afterwards to satisfy the Public Service Commissioners (a fastidious set of people) that you can write essays in correct and idiomatic English on subjects like 'Aerial Transport', 'The Singapore Naval Base', 'How Hitlerism can best be combated', and 'the effect of going off the Gold Standard', and also show

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your mathematical ability by computing correctly the time when the earth will attain dissolution supposing it moves quarter of an inch beyond the orbit, in every thousand years. And having done all this you may yet not be taken in the list of eligibles for the Taluk Office, but may be placed in the list of clerks to be employed under the Deputy Inspector of Schools or the Health Inspector. Having rendered all these satisfactions, you must further possess infinite patience to wait, without turning grey and growing older than twenty-five, cheerfully abiding such time as you may suddenly receive a call from the Collector to join the Health Inspector's Office, forthwith, in a fifteen days' vacancy.

Not so for a District Board President. You may have one eye, you may have one leg, and you may suffer from all diseases, known and unknown to the medical profession. You need not know all the letters of the alphabet. It is enough if you know as many as go to make up your name. And as for your character, you ought not to have forged a cheque, and got caught. And quite

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rightly too. It is the people that choose you to govern their affairs, and they must be content. Have you sufficient money to scatter about—either your own or that you can commandeer? You may become a District Board President—and keep it too, as long as you can find more money to scatter about. Money, judiciously used, can make you even a Cabinet Minister, despite your one eye, your one leg, and your non-acquaintance with the whole of the alphabet though you cannot become a Taluk Office clerk with the same qualifications. Almighty dollar, in this best of all worlds, will cover up all personal, intellectual, and temperamental deficiencies, lift you to the starry sphere, and assign to you a place next only to red Sirius or bright Aldebarn.

Mr. Sengilian had both eyes and both legs, had a strong, if a corpulent, constitution, a country appearance, and an immense lot of paternal money. He lived in a village six miles from the town, and cultivated extensive acres of *nanja* and *punja* lands. His wife went to the fields to watch the harvest, and worked at home, carrying paddy to the street to dry,

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in big bamboo baskets supported on her hip. He sold yearly 300 kalams of paddy and 400 kalams of groundnuts, and paid an income-tax of ninety rupees. On the whole he lived without any cares, quite a respectable, happy and a contented country gentleman. Accomplishments he did not possess much, his educational efforts having stopped at multiplication tables, and Arappalisar *satakam*, acquired in the village school. His father was against sending him to the Town High School, under the belief that boys in schools and colleges learnt nothing there that would enable them to earn, but learnt a great deal that habituated them to spend. "What does he want with education? It is work enough for him if he could keep and properly manage the substantial wealth I have acquired for him", he said. And so Mr. Sengilian did in the beginning. Of civic affairs he knew nothing. Once, he was summoned to serve as an assessor in a murder trial. Mr. Sengilian felt as if he was summoned by His Majesty to appear before him, to kneel down, and be knighted forthwith. When the servant came and asked him if he

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could harvest a field on Monday, he said 'Monday, you idiot? Don't you know I am going that day on Sircar duty, as the Sessions Judge particularly wants me to help him in a case?' There was not one person in the whole village, and some villages round it, to whom he had not proudly communicated the distinction conferred on him by the Sircar, and for some days, he looked as if consumed in his own importance.

On the appointed day, he was standing in the corridor of the Sessions Court, in a small loin cloth, not extending very much below the knees, peeping under an immense black long coat that could have accommodated three corpulent Sengilians rolled into one, with a huge turban built on his head completely covering his ears, and with a handleless boy's umbrella tucked under his armpit. When his name was called he frantically rushed into the Court, jumped into the accused dock, doubled himself, and made prodigious *salams* to the Judge. The huge turban struck against the dock railing and jerked off. He furiously clutched at it and restored it to his head, but

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the handleless boy's umbrella now fell down, with a metallic crash, which he made efforts to clutch. The Judge laughed, the lawyers laughed, the spectators laughed, and even the accused, by whose side he was standing, could not help laughing. 'Not there,' said the Judge. He took another run from the dock, and now jumped into the witness-box, with the umbrella still under the armpit. The Judge himself could not help bursting out into uproarious laughter. The Interpreter approached him, with his mouth closed behind a handkerchief, took Mr. Sengilian by the hand, asked him to leave the umbrella outside the Court, and conducted him to his seat. Throughout the trial Mr. Sengilian's mind was severely exercised for the safety of his umbrella, and once or twice, he stealthily heaved himself, and looked in the direction of the umbrella to see whether it was there. As the trial was progressing, Mr. Sengilian nudged his brother assessor, and asked in a whisper whether the Judge would ask him anything, and what he should say. "Keep quiet. Say as I say," he whispered back. At the close of the trial the

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Judge asked the first assessor: 'what is your verdict, gentleman?" 'guilty,' he said, "and yours?" askod the Judge of Mr. Sengilian. 'Gilt' he said, and went home immensely pleased with having discharged the Sircar duty, and even more pleased that he regained his umbrella.

But that was old Sengilian. He is now a District Board President. Though his intellectual capacities have not much broadened, he has grown prodigiously shrewd, and has learnt the ways of the world infinitely well. The turning point came in his thirty-fifth year.

On account of the scare of burglars in the village, he removed himself to the adjoining town, a revenue sub-division, with a Deputy Collector's Office, a District Munsif's Court, quite an immense number of lawyers, motor buses, and coffee hotels. And it was wonderful what a lot he had learnt in the space of two years. He got acquainted with the politics of the Taluk, saw many elections fought and won, many fought and lost. He saw many, much inferior to him in intellectual capacity or financial worth, taken round the town in

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procession after a successful election, with garlands round their necks, and shouts of *Jai* after their names. Ambition mildly invaded his brain, but reports of the immense sums the candidates had spent towards achieving success, staggered him, being hereditarily trained to be careful about his money. But in a good or an evil hour for him party considerations induced election intriguers to surround him. They said that it was an utter shame that a man of his worth should be out of the Local Board—a man of his wealth, of his influence, and of his shrewd business capacities. They said that his virtues were many, and his faults absolutely nil, that there was a duty a man like him owed to the country, and that there was not a man in the Taluk who could stand in opposition to him, and get half a-dozen votes. He must come out and accept a nomination. All this and much more they told him, and Mr. Sengilian became puffed up. He was told that the election would not cost him a rupee, but as the battle thickened, he borrowed Rs. 2,500 from a Nattukottai firm and spent it. He borrowed another

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Rs. 2,500 from another Nattukottai firm after a week, and spent it. Two further borrowings of Rs. 2,500 each were made within another week, and spent also. And in the end, one jolly evening, he was taken round the streets of the town in procession loaded with garlands and dinned by shouts of Sengilianki-Jai. He was told that another Rs. 7,000 would easily make him a Taluk Board President. In for a penny, in for a pound, he thought, and became a Taluk Board President.

The whole of his household underwent a change from this time. He supported his authority with great dignity and distinction, and the Head Clerk assiduously attended to the business side of the Local Board Administration. His wife never more watched harvests in the fields, nor carried paddy in bamboo baskets to dry. She wore diamonds, and sleevesless bodies, and amused herself each evening at the Ladies' Club. He did not now sell 300 kalams of paddy and 400 kalams of groundnut in the year, but his usufructuary mortgagees did. But he was now a respected and honoured citizen,

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and carried himself as befitted his position in life.

He longed for a title—at least a Rao Sahib. A Rao Sahib was not difficult to obtain, if you knew how to set about it. And Mr. Sengilian knew. There are deserving Rao Sahibs, and there are Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society Rao Sahibs, S.P.C.A. Rao Sahibs, Baby Week Rao Sahibs, Health Week Rao Sahibs, Scout Rao Sahibs, and Rao Sahibs of many other kinds of social work. He got up an Agricultural Show, and requested the Collector to open it. He gathered a quarter of a measure each of twenty different kinds of paddy, put each in a tin can with a label stuck on each, and arranged the cans on a table in the centre of the Hall, and put a man near it to explain to the visitors. Four long sugar-canes with labels on them stood in the corner of the Hall, under the charge of another man. There were four onions of the size of woodapples, and four fat turnips grown in a scientifically treated field. There were four ploughs, and a number of plough shares and shovels outside the Hall. And the whole Hall was surrounded by splendid

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decorations, with an arch in front 'welcoming our honourable and popular Collector.' The Collector honestly thought that there was no one like Mr. Sengilian in the whole district, so enthusiastic in disinterested agricultural uplift and he also said so in his speech.

Mr. Sengilian also became the Secretary of the Local Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, and sent eloquent reports: 'Amavasai, convicted for seven years for highway robbery, released 1½ years ago, is now a peaceful and honest citizen and could be safely entrusted even with the finances of the Government of India.' 'Ponnan, convicted for three years, and relased last year, has taken to honest land farming, on modern scientific lines, and knows more about improved agriculture than the Deputy Director of that Department.' And all through the efforts of Sengilian.

Mr. Sengilian became a Rao Sahib. Success bred more ambitions. He contested more elections, and rose from position to position, and he is now a District Board President.

But there is another picture. Alas! now when he goes home in his car with four

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garlands on his neck and six cups of tea inside his stomach, he is greeted by four boisterous gentlemen, who plainly say they can no more wait, no, not another instant. As his dignity increased, his finances came into a hopeless muddle, and he is now one of the most pitiable and hopeless victims of our glorious democracy. As he lies on his bed he whines 'had I remained old Sengilian, etc., etc.,' but, all the same, he goes to his office in the morning and dismisses two schoolmasters.

He has an imminent need for a trifle of a ten thousand, to tide over temporary difficulties. Can anyone recommend a lender?

Misfortunes in trade make many bankrupts, and drink also. But elections make more.

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O. S. 49

For about a week each time before O. S. 49 came up for trial, there was a sort of a merry conversation, among the members of the Bar. The case provoked much mirth, and sometimes ungentlemanly loose talk, which ought honestly to be regretted, seeing that it concerned a girl whose reputation for morality was beyond the least breath of suspicion. But the world will talk, without troubling itself about the uncharitableness behind it, especially if a girl should behave differently from her neighbour; and that was also the main grievance and defence of Narasu in the case.

O. S. 49 had seen two District Munsifs (which may give you an idea of its age); and had been pending on the file of Mr. Athmanathan for about a year, despite his best efforts to dispose of it even on the first day of its hearing before him. Mr. Athmanathan was by no means a weak Munsif nor was he a hard one, but just the right sort, patient, painstaking and conscientious, with an admirably good temper,

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except at auction bridge, when, it must be confessed, he behaved something like a 'cannibal with a tooth-ache'. But I suppose no one's temper ought to be judged by his behaviour at auction bridge, as it is an occasion when every player is under a self-hypnotised delusion that he is the best player, and that this partner always plays wrong.

On the Bench, and in private life, Mr. Athmanathan had simply a loveable temper. He was a gentleman of a happy disposition, in whose smiling face, calmness and tranquillity was ever reflected. There was nothing that could ruffle him, not even one year old suits. I have always thought that, when a District Munsif with 600 pending suits (of course, the legacy of the predecessors) of which two hundred are one year and more than one year old, sits in the middle of a quarter, patiently listening to the arguments of a learned vakil for the adjournment of a more than one year old suit, that District Munsif ought at once to be canonised, instead of being kept on as a Judge. It is a strain endurable only by a saint, and not by ordinary judicial flesh and blood.

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In fact, it is an occasion when, if the Judge should hurl an ink-bottle at the learned vakil, and the learned vakil should die in consequence, any conscientious jury should only return a verdict of "justifiable homicide."

The fact is that old suits have been made into such a bogey, that they are perhaps the only rocks upon which the best and most honest intentions of cordiality between the Bench and the Bar get disastrously split. Take away the terror, and you will find every Judge, "the sweetest old boy" that you could ever desire to adorn the Bench. Don't imagine that the Bench is all eager to work, and the Bar only to laze, or that large pendencies are due to the tardiness of the latter. It is a legend which the Bench chooses to keep up to justify its conscience.

Mr. Athmanathan, for one, had no terror for old suits. He was simply just to them, in his own conscientious way, adjourning them on their merits, as much as he did the newest ones. But whenever O. S. 49 came up, one could see a sickly nervousness creep over him, and he adjourned it for the mere asking.

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O. S. 49 was a suit by Padma against her husband Narasu, for the restitution of conjugal rights. Padma was married to Narasu fifteen years ago, when she was twelve. She joined Narasu when she was sixteen, and for a couple of years, they lived as man and wife, when Narasu suddenly cut her away for grossly unjustifiable reasons. For three or four years she had patiently borne her misfortune, trying by private efforts to convert Narasu into a more reasonable mood. And failing in it, she had sought the help of the Court to infuse into Narasu some love for her and persuade him to take her back. The case was more or less considered as a test suit to vindicate the cause of the much-depressed wife-hood. Padma also felt mildly proud that the eyes of civilization were unwinkingly looking on her, and her cause.

Padma was a spirited girl, who easily slid into becoming a champion of women's rights. She was the only daughter of a Deputy Collector, a gentleman rather a little too vain of his office, and afflicted with his own importance in the scheme of things. He could never

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walk in the street without a constable going half a mile in advance, clearing vehicular and pedestrain traffic for him, and a dalayat coming behind with his umbrella and stick tucked under his arm-pit, while he himself walked in the centre with the air of one who was conscious, every inch of him, of the respect that was due to him. Even when he went into a temple to worship the deity (an occasion calling for humility), he was escorted by a dalayat with a lantern in front, and another dalayat with his stick behind, while the shrine was cleared for his reception of every non-Depnty Collector and his wife. He was so office-proud, that some people used to ask, with harmless mirth, whether, when the Deputy Collector shuffled off this mortal coil, he would be escorted by a constable and a dalayat on his other-worldly journey, and if not, what he would do to support his dignity there.

But except for this small weakness of aggressive official ostentation, he was a generous-open-hearted man, going about doing good to the people in his own benevolently autocratic

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way, and much loved by the common people, as well as his equals in office.

The Deputy Collector (quite modern in his ideas and habits of life) had lavished love, affection, and any amount of money on Padma, giving her the best 'education' according to his lights, engaging a European lady tutor to teach her English, manners, conversation and deportment at a cost of Rs. 100 a month, apparently desiring to keep her from the contamination of Indian thoughts and habits. She had been taught piano instead of vina or violin, and had been taken to clubs and parties in mixed company, where she enlivened the guests with her music and recitations. She plunged recklessly into all sorts of knowledge, mostly gathered from books and modern-day magazines, and with all the easy assurance of youth, rushed into full acceptance of new world theories and facts that older people had yet been only debating. She had definitely formed opinions about women's rights and the limits to martial duties and responsibilities. In fact, she was a splendidly spoilt child who had come to conceive

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happiness of life as consisting chiefly of a whirl of gaieties, the enjoyment of all the material comforts of the new world, and a freedom to behave and do pretty much as she liked.

But at bottom, she was a sweet and good-natured girl, a chirping, healthy, honest-hearted variety, easily amenable to noble and even ethereal impulses, if only they could be brought anywhere near her. Her gay, light-hearted chatter, her audacious frankness and her easy accessibility to conversation, were sometimes misunderstood, but there was that fire in her eyes which singed any attempt at liberties, and mercilessly snubbed in advance any side-tracking of conversation, in the direction of offending against strict sexual proprieties.

One evening, for instance, she had been alone at home, standing upstairs picking jessamines out of her flower pot, when a gallant, misguided youth, with whom she had oftentimes exchanged intimate conversations, looked upon her from the courtyard, with soulful eyes, the meaning of which no girl could fail to

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understand by instinct. The youth eagerly expected she would throw flowers at him in loving approval. She threw flowers no doubt, but including the flower pot, and the youth fled.

In fact, Padma was instinctively a noble and good-natured girl with plenty of nerve and grit to live up to any ideal that she may set before her, but greatly spoilt and perverted, on account of having taken all sorts of 'nonsense' into her head, as Narasu said.

When Padma was married to Narasu, when she was twelve, (which was done on account of pressure from the Deputy Collector's mother, too old to catch up civilisation) it was expected that Narasu would give her comforts and position equal at least to what she had under the parental roof. But Narasu proved faithless, and became a mere lawyer—a delinquency which the Deputy Collector never forgave. He had not much practice, and practically no income, except what compassionate District Munsifs may give him in the way of commissions and court-guardianships, and had been left to

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puzzle out life on an income of Rs. 70 or 100 a month, which did not go far.

When Padma joined Narasu, she came with a number of things, among which were her piano, dozens of powder-puffs, basket-loads of forks and spoons, several pairs of dainty shoes, with velvet linings, a huge load of ward-robes, with a number of underwears unknown to ordinary Hindu girlhood, half a dozen tennis rackets, cases of books and magazines, and plenty of 'nonsense' inside her head. She chose a room in the house, all to herself, hung its walls with all kinds of pictures, covered the floor with dainty carpets, installed a writing table in the centre, and a workstand at one end, giving the room an atmosphere of busy occupation. And here she lounged all day, or read flighty novels, except when she was examining, with childish pleasure, her pink almond shaped nails, the rosy palms, and the dimples that marked the knuckles—in those small, idle hands, that had never done anything harder than cut the leaves of a new novel or twiddle with wool and needle. And in the evening, she went out for a walk or tennis,

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defying all criticisms, in a low-neck skin tight bodice, with sleeves stopping at the shoulders, her hair plaited to end in a pink ribbon, and her feet enclosed in the smartest of slippers. All of which shocked Narasu's mother beyond endurance.

Narasu's mother was an old lady of advanced years, who had started life in a different world of women, and grew ignorant together with them. She had long been postponing her demise, and, at seventy, she was still a woman with a busy energy, occupying herself throughout the day and a good part of the night in one kind of domestic work or another. She was something like Aunt Tabitha,

"Whatever I do and whatever I say,
Aunt Tabitha tells me that isn't the way;
When she was a girl (forty summers ago),
Aunt Tabitha tells me they never did so."
"If a youth passes by, it may happen, no doubt,
He may chance to look in, as I chance to look out;
She would never endure an impertinent stare,
It is horrid, she says, and I musn't sit there."

Narasu's mother was really shocked at her daughter-in-law's carrying on.

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"The world has gone utterly mad and degenerate. What young girls are coming to nowadays, I can't think. They adorn themselves not as we do for the sake of comfort and modesty, but, like dancing girls, for the deliberate purpose of attracting young men. And the things they do!—striking at the root of modesty, seemliness and the sacred ties of home life," she said. And, poor old honest soul, she firmly believed that a girl with skin-tight bodice, in low neck, walking in dainty shoes, was not only wicked in this world, but had lost all opportunities of going to that other blissful world, called heaven. "Yes," Padma said, "Heaven is reserved only for such nagging old cronies like the mother-in-law."

Narasu also was secretly agitated in his mind, though he loved Padma dearly. She was loving no doubt, gave him immense pleasure, smothered him with her kisses, and cheered him with her artless laughter, but the kind of wife that Narasu wanted was a sweet, innocent, unsophisticated wife, essentially feminine, moving about the house in perfect sweetness and domesticity, with enchantingly shy and

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shrinking manners—in fact a wife who felt nothing nobler than the business of being a wife and a good house wife—not a whirlwind of a girl, however loving and charming. He was grieved at her frivolity and her immodest audacity of behaviour. He was a sensitive sort of man, and found unable to live down the open jibes and veiled innuendoes of his friends and neighbours. He talked the matter over with her.

"I don't want to deny you your legitimate pleasures and amusements, my girl, but find all your pleasures at home and with me. We are not the sort of people who can defy public opinion. Not all can do it. You know what used to be said—that one must be a duchess or a barmaid to defy public opinion. People in our station of life cannot afford to do it. We have to behave with dignity, and not do things that our neighbours think objectionable," he said.

At which she kissed him indulgently, said he was a gloriously stupid and sweetest of husbands, kissed him again, and left the house with her tennis racket, in low-necked bodice, and dainty slippers.

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Which ultimately culminated in O. S. 49. The first Munsif, before whom the suit came up, simply raised the issues and adjourned it for trial. The case involved the decision of the simple question whether, when a girl took to modern ways, which was not acceptable to the husband, it was a sufficient ground for denying restitution of conjugal rights. Narasu had no doubt about her morals or her love for him, but the way she carried on ! It was atrocious. Another question that was involved was whether, even if her conduct was not unacceptable to the husband, could the husband discard her on account of the ridicule he is made to suffer from his friends and neighbours? A plea of limitation was also raised ; and was to be argued as a preliminary issue.

The second Munsif was a 'Disposal Munsif.' He was of the thunder-and-lightning variety, who everywhere went by the name of 'School-master Munsif,' on account of his irritating habit of catechising the lawyers on their various delinquencies, until they felt themselves like school boys penitently making excuses before their teacher. Every time the

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case came up, he swore, that he would dispose of it, even if he should sit late till eight in the night, and even if he should do so for several days at a stretch. But Padma's lawyer was one who had specialised on getting adjournments. Usually his cases disposed themselves by exhaustion. It used to be said of him that if 'Yama' came to him for his life, he would promptly put in an adjournment petition before him, and take his chance. And all that the second Munsif was able to do was to give a finding on the question of limitation. The point was whether the suit was in time, not having been instituted within three years after Padma was discarded. It was argued by Narasu's lawer that suits for the recovery of a husband or a wife were suits, in effect, for recovery of movables, as a husband or wife could not be said to be immovable property, and were therefore governed by the three years' rule of limitation. But after elaborate arguments on both sides, the Munsif found that the suit was not barred by limitation, and posted it for trial.

The case had already created a sensation.

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The plaint, written statement, and the various stages of the case, were, from time to time, diligently reported in the papers *in extenso*. Padma had been receiving telegrams and letters of congratulations on her bold step and the heroic cause she was upholding. For instance, THE ADVANCED INDIAN LADIES' CLUB telegraphed "Bravo comrade. You have taken the first philanthropic step in the cause of wives, and support you with all our heart."

The Secretary of THE FREEDOM OF WIVES' SOCIETY wired: "Hearty congratulations. Go it. Hold the banner of the Freedom of Wives aloft."

And Padma was tickled, grew vain, and became more obstinate in pursuing the case.

When Mr. Athmanathan took up the case for the first time he judicially weighed the arguments of Padma's lawyer for an adjournment, but found no sufficient grounds to grant it.

But Padma herself stepped in, and prayed that the case might be adjourned, as she intended to move the District Court for transfer of the case to another file. In fact she did

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move the District Court, set out the case fully, and the important issues involved, and urged the astounding ground "that she was reliably informed, and believed it to be true, that Mr. Athmanathan's relations with his wife were not of a character to enable him to bring an unprejudiced mind on the case."

The District Judge first laughed, and then grew angry, and dismissed the petition, passing a stricture on the vakil who filed the petition.

The case was finally posted for trial to the 23rd of April. The day was kept clear of other suits. Whenever another old suit was sought to be adjourned to that date the Judge was reminded that O. S. 49 was posted for that day. Lawyers talked merrily of the case, for several days in advance, took sides, and gratuitously quarrelled in the Bar room, over the principles involved in it. While Narasu was carrying on his lonely existence by browsing in the library that Padma had left behind.

Twenty-third arrived, but the parties did not arrive. They had been engaged to play that evening a tennis match, in the Nilgris, in mixed doubles, with themselves as partners. And

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the respective lawyers received a wire that the suit was settled out of Court, and that the parties could not come as they were engaged in a tennis tournament.

"There is no resisting the signs of the times. Women will conquer in the end," said Padma's lawyer.

"The more is the pity," said Narasu's lawyer.

"Things will happen like that so long as our youths have given up reading the Ramayana and taken to Edgar Wallace, Wells and Shaw," remarked Mr. Athmanathan, extra-judicially.

And O. S. 49 went to augment the list of more-than-one-year-old suits disposed of in the quarter.

But the world lost a judicial decision on the question whether a wife's unconventional behaviour is a sufficient ground to deny restitution.

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WORDS OF COMFORT

This is about the time of the year when ye parents must be extremely distracted. You have sold everything within the first four months of the year to pay the Government kist. You have paid the examination fees for your children in February. You have spent no end of money in travelling about, to find a suitable bridegroom for your daughter, to marry her in May or June. (Your wife had said it ought not to be put off). Probably you have married her, and the piper, the florist, the gaslight man, and the javili merchant are visiting you twice everyday. The Income-tax Officer has sent you notice of assessment, (which did not mean that you had income, but but that you had not kept reliable accounts) enclosing chalans, asking you to pay before the 12th of July, and informing you firmly that if you do not pay before that day, a penalty equal to the assessment will be levied from you. And now the schools and colleges are re-opening, and you have to do something

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about the boys, and likely about your newly acquired son-in-law.

I can well sympathise with you, if, as I expect, you are sitting in your room with your head down, supported by your hands, with an absent-minded look in your eyes, furiously reflecting on all your past sins, and asking yourself whoever you had been foolish to marry, and if you should have married, why you had been more foolish to beget children. Marriages, they say, are made in Heaven, but it is now your feeling, that though they may be solemnised there, the couple are precipitately sent down to Hell to enjoy it. This is also the time when you fervently wish that you were a bird or a lamb. The bird and the lamb are happy; they have nothing to do except to flutter in the air, or frisk in the meadow, and be rapturously sung by poets, because, probably, poets miss something in life which they find in birds and lambs: Birds have no sons to send to college, no daughters to marry, no income-tax to pay, and no relations or dependents pecking away their lives. You perhaps also insanely doubt whether mind or intellect,

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which is said to make for man's superiority over the rest of the creation, is not, after all, a disease, with which man has been afflicted since his beginning, and whether birds and lambs are not more happy because they are free from it. Morbid ideas. But it comes naturally to a distracted mind to question the fundamentals of existence. Others will call it lunacy. In fact, they do. When a man out of distraction puts an end to himself, to improve his condition, the Coroner and the Jury only record a verdict of 'suicide in a fit of temporary insanity!'

But I can sympathise with you. I have been in that state, and for the last one week, I have been furiously abusing the educational authorities about their stupidity or callousness in making the announcement of examination results and the re-opening of schools and colleges synchronise with the marriage season, the income-tax assessment, and the payment of kists. In my days, we sat for examination in cool December, and joined college in January, but God only knows why it has been changed to the summer months, unless it be to distract the parents.

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I have four sons, and if any of you should have more, please have my condolence.

My first son passed his B.A. this year, and since the announcement of the result, myself, my wife, my family, and all my near and distant relations, my son's father-in-law, his wife, and all his near and distant relations, together with all visitors to my house, and all my friends everywhere, have been asking what he should do next. My son's father-in-law, who is a sub-judge, and who therefore does not know the difficulties of life, has been writing to me the advisability of my son studying something more, as a mere B. A. went for nothing. (He has not been financing my son's education.) I was for getting him into some employment. I have been daily scanning the front page of the papers, for possible appointments, but no appointment seems to be vacant except insurance agencies. There are at least two-hundred and forty insurance companies wanting agents, and some are prepared to employ my son on Rs. 75 a month, if he would deposit Rs. 2,000 cash. I was thinking about it, when my son cut all such speculations short.

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He was obstinately for becoming a research scholar in history. I told him that a boy who got 40 per cent in the examination had not much chance of success as a research scholar. But he has faith. He has already been working on a subject, he said,—"A new light on the relationship of Warren Hastings with the denizens of Oudh—From original sources." He had also consulted his professor, an eminent scholar, who is himself now reconstructing Indian History on the 'Hitherto undiscovered pages in Ananda Rangam Pillai's Diary', and the Professor has promised to take him on. I asked my son what was going to happen to the world after the true relationship between Warren Hastings and denizens of Oudh is established. He glared a contemptuous look at me, and left the room in anger banging the door behind, and told his mother that his father was a fossilised bug, who could never be made to understand what it is to acquire knowledge for knowledge's sake. Frankly, I have no objection to anybody acquiring knowledge for its own sake, provided the acquisition is made

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with his own money, but if Warren Hastings' relationship with the denizens of Oudh is to be established with an enormous expenditure of my money, I think it right that I should be permitted to have a say in the matter. But you have to deal delicately with sons of modern days; you must behave as if his opinions and suggestions are entitled to considerable weight, and are receiving your earnest consideration. All the same, I took him in one of his pleasant moments, and affectionately patting his head, told him that it is my earnest wish that my son should be a practical youth, instead of a research scholar. I hinted that Warren Hastings must have left relations who would further clear his character. He flared up. In a contest of obstinacy between Youth and Age, it is the Youth that always wins, and if the mother joins hands with the son, there is nothing for it but to surrender. My son is joining the research class.

My second son passed the Intermediate, and has been asking advice, of all and sundry, whether he could continue the Arts course, or

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take to some technical line—Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Medicine, Veterinary, Agricultural College, Forest College, or take to some business, or apply for some appointment in the Railway, or seek the various other alternatives with which youths and parents usually cudgel their brains at this part of the year. He was for some time dejected, through indecision, and one day he came and told me that he was not going to do anything, but work for 'temple entry'. Poor fellow! the thinking was too much for him, and it left his brain slightly demented. I thought that unless his mind was diverted into pursuing some course of study, he might drift into bad company, become a public worker, and create new problems to complicate an already infernally complicated world. So he is joining Philosophy Honours.

My third son appeared for the S. S. L. C. but failed in three subjects. He is furiously wondering how it happened. He suspects that the tabulators must have mistakenly transposed his marks to another number, and

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entered a duffer's against his, or that the examiner's calf must have eaten away his answer paper, and that the examiner had faked his marks because he had to enter something against his number. Such things happened before, he says, and he has been pestering me to move the High Court to issue a writ of something, in Latin (all writs are in Latin) asking the S. S. L. C. Board to produce his answer papers, together with the examiners who valued them. I advised him, in soothing tones, not to think of such a thing, and told him that it was disastrous to begin life by getting into the hands of lawyers, and that if he should save the money that should be paid to the lawyers, he might fail seven times in the S. S. L. C. and not be very much the poorer. He is joining the School Final Class.

My fourth son has been promoted from the I Form to the II, and the other day he presented to me a staggering bill for note-books. The educational system firmly believes that the efficiency of a boy's education is proportionate to the number of note-books he can spoil. The teacher has asked him to fetch money for 24

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note-books, some of 80 pages, and some of 40. That should be enough to start with, he said, besides two of eighty pages he has to buy every week. I think school education will be four times less costly if so many note-books are not among the educational equipments of boys. But who am I to say that?

And there is my new son-in-law. He is for going to England for the I.C.S. He has counted up the cost, and it does not come to much. A fifteen thousand should be enough to pull him through, including passage, and he has written to me that he hopes I won't find it inconvenient. A son-in-law is not a person with whom you can argue, or to whom you can disclose your financial position. I am only hoping that the Board would reject him on the ground of insanity. He passed his B. A. only in the third attempt.

And now, ye parents, among my readers, I have told you all this, only that you may take some comfort that you are not alone in your suffering. But don't lose heart. Take courage. We are living in a world dominated by the political theory of securing the greatest

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happiness to the greatest number. The Economic Conference is deliberating, and all the best brains of the world are there. Follow its proceedings carefully. You may not understand them, because they are highly technical, but that does not matter. Nobody understands. The speakers themselves do not understand each other. And when the Conference has concluded its sessions, and settled the world's programme, your personal economic depression, and your personal currency troubles will disappear along with the world's.

And then we shall live in a world of peace, plenty and unalloyed happiness. The greatest happiness, not merely to the greatest number, but to all.

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BRIGHTENING JOURNALISM

It is not that our newspapers and journals are not alright. They are. We have all those features that English and American journalists give to the public. We have the pictures, of the man who inadvertently swallowed his own false teeth, of the persons who go to England or America, and of those who return from England or America, of the persons who die, and of those who are living, who have become great or wicked, who have succeeded in elections or escaped out of the prison, of the winner in the races, with the jockey up and the owner at the bridle.

We have also the sporting news of the world, going over four pages, and 'please see page 19,' and we have all sorts of advertisements that would help us to know where to get anything, from a noose to hang ourselves, to a wife to be bothered about.

We have all the telegrams of the world, and the Letters to the Editor, where a person starts a question whether the lime fruit is

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indigenous to India. One man says it is, another man says it is not, a third man says certainly it is, and a fourth man says decidedly it is not, and then all of them forget about the lime fruit, and continue through six further letters merely abusing each other, while the Editor keeps looking on mischievously, and finally interposes 'This correspondence will now cease,' when an angry correspondent has with him five and a half sheets of typed vitriol that would burn the machinery in the printing.

It is not that our newspapers and journals are not up to the mark. I only want to suggest how much brighter they would be, if they also introduced those anecdotal personal paragraphs that are a distinctive and interesting feature of English and American journalism. I read the following in an English paper.

"Some time ago Sir William Joynson-Hicks managed to sandwich a reunion dinner in between two visits to prisons. He told stories of his visits to the prisons. His best effort was a story about a man who was classed as an habitual criminal. 'Jicks' wanted to know

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whether a love of prison-life, or a tendency towards mischief was the real cause of his criminal incarcerations.

'S'elp me, Gawd!' replied the man, 'it is because my pals 'ere among the warders, bless 'em, ain't arf as down on me as my old woman is when I'm at 'ome!'

Nothing gives a man so much interest as to know what great men said and did in their off-moments. They would be lost to the public, if the newspapers do not gather them up and broadcast. What do you say of the following as a sample for our country?

Men and Things

I was among those present when Mr. Bernard Shaw landed on the pier. A callow youth asked his neighbour "why does he grow beard?"

Bernard Shaw overheard it, and said 'Why shouldn't I, young man?' Another person behind, moved to admiration by this wit, whispered 'Everything that comes out of his mouth is witty.' Shaw overheard this also.

'Everything,' he said (with G.B.S. modesty

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was a vice), 'all the wit that the world admires of mine is only the fraction that escaped getting stuck in the beard.'

The whole of it would surely make the world go still more abject.

* * * * *

The other day I met the Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastriar at his Bangalore residence. He was walking in his garden-path in a dainty pair of slippers, with a red-covered book in his hand. We talked of old times, of the Round Table Conference, and then we got to talk of prettiness.

"Are men and women prettier now than they were?" I asked. Rt. Hon. Sastriar can talk on any subject.

"If you mean whether we are prettier than we were when we were monkeys, certainly we are," he said.

"But what will the monkeys say?" I asked.

"Monkeys can't say anything. So, don't bother," he said.

* * * * *

I don't know if you know that Mr. V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar, that literary and highly

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cultured gentleman, has the hobby of collecting walking sticks. He has collected thousands of them and spends an immense lot of money and his aesthetics, in fashioning all sorts of artistic handles for them. He once took me round the collection.

"Why do you want so many? Even if you should use one every day, you won't be able to use them all up in your life time," I said.

"Perhaps. Is it not an inducement to prolong life?" he said funnily, and laughed his characteristically generous laugh. "Add some more," I said.

* * * *

When I ran across Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer the other day, he had just returned from Trivandrum. We had a long chat, in the course of which I asked him why he chose the Bar for his son's profession.

"It is not a choice. It is an ancestral right. He is entitled to it by birth," he said. C. P's father Pattabirama Iyer was a leading lawyer in his time.

"For one thing you haven't forgotten your law," I said.

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"No. I forget nothing except what I ate last night," he said. A man who works' 'so hard as to sweat icicles' can be excused for forgetting his last night's dinner.

* * * *

Dr. Rangachari had the reputation of being a very reserved sort. You could never get him to say more than one word even when he must speak. But with me and some friends he was always quite chatty. Not many perhaps knew what a fund of humour he had. You could not talk to him for half an hour without being struck by it. One day I told him that it was a good thing that he got the aeroplane.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you can reach your distant patients as quick as possible," I said.

"And get back as quick as possible before they die, eh?" he said smiling. Dr. Rangachari never laughed but only smiled.

"But you are too clever a doctor to allow any of your patients to die," I said.

"I never allow them. They die without my permission," he said.

* * * *

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I may say this to Paragraph writers—that according to English and American conventions, it is not necessary that the writer must know the persons, nor need the incidents necessarily have occurred. You must write as if you are chums with every great man. You must 'run into him' somewhere, you must 'run across him' somewhere else, and it must always be 'the other day', and over a 'cosy chat'. For a variation, you may sometimes say 'you were told in confidence', when you are letting out some pleasant weakness of a great man.

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF MADRAS

Madras. That glorious city of civilised noises, of tramcars, buses, and electric trains, of cinemas, theatres, and horse races, of coffee hotels, shaving saloons, and bleaching laundries. A city, where a country visitor goes in for a splash of riotous amusements, and goes back home with four palams of asafoetida from Ramanujam Chetti's shop, that the wife may not grouse. Provided, of course, that after visiting the races, he does not commit suicide by falling in front of the electric train.

For those that may not be acquainted with Madras in detail, I think a little bit of its geography may come in useful. Madras is situated on the banks of the Cooum, even as London is situated on the Thames, Calcutta on the Hughly, and Benares on the Ganges. The Cooum is, of course, not a sacred river like the Ganges, nor as big as those others, nor particularly fragrant, but as it adds dignity to a metropolis to be situated on the bank of a river, the Cooum serves the purpose quite as

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well. The river actually cuts the city into two halves. The large stretch on its northern bank is the city proper. It is bounded on the west by the Buckingham Canal, on the east by a sea shore that has no visible sea, and on the north by the Corporation slums and sluices. This part of the city is again cut into two by the Esplanade and the China Bazaar Road, (where the one ends and where the other begins no body has yet discovered), at right angles to which pass northwards several interminable streets, the broadest of which, as the name indicates, is The Broadway, where a car and a tram may not travel astride. The city here is called George Town, and is chiefly inhabited by shopkeepers, mandy merchants, Government and Bank clerks, and professional prostitutes, particularly in the western portion, like the Mint Street and the Elephant Gate. On Office days at 10 O'clock, clerks might be seen on their way to the Office, with an umbrella in one hand, and their tiffin in the other, wrapped up in an old newspaper. A few years ago they went also airing their hair for drying, but those were

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days when only a fraction of Madras was cropped. With the increase of a hygienic sense, and the advent of a large number of hair-cutting saloons, the whole of Madras is now cropped, and the clerks are now saved the trouble of waving their hair.

On the south side of the Esplanade, is the High Court, where decisions of erratic munsifs, judges, and Magistrates, are set right. And next to it is the Law College, where B.L.s are manufactured, so many by the hour, like Ford Cars, and are sent adrift into the world, with high endeavours, and prodigious futility. In front of the High Court is Dr. Miller's Statue, watching the Christian College, where students learn their lessons betwixt intervals of stamping the gallery, a traditional habit of which the College is abnormally proud.

Beyond the High Court, in the south, is the Fort Maidan, and the Fort, where is stationed a garrison, chiefly employed in the Mess, and in playing interminable foot-ball, at all parts of the day. Inside the Fort there is the Accountant-General's office, where the Government Accounts of the whole Presidency are audited,

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and where also is settled the question whether the item " Food for cat " (*i.e.*, the cat appointed for record rooms to catch rats), should be drawn in the Gazetted Officer's Bill form or in the Contingent Bill form, as a detail under " Office expenses ". Here also is the Legislative Council, where all the talking of the country is done. It was estimated by a scientific statistician, that if all the talking done there should be rolled into a hollow ball, it would contain enough gas to explode two planets at a shot. A little distance to the west of these is the United Club where the World's cricket and tennis Champions are manufactured ; and next to it is the Medical College, where smart, young men, and dainty young girls, skip about with stethoscopes in their hands, and cigarettes in their mouths, and are trained in the art of rendering pre-mortem ministrations to suffering humanity. And close by it is the General Hospital, where humanity actually suffers, and gets better, or dies. Overlooking it, is the Central Station, on the other side of the road, with a huge tower, containing enormous clocks, with so many irrelevant hands in them,

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that it would be a miracle if you could discover what time they indicate at any particular hour. And at the farthest western end is the Egmore Railway Station from where the S.I.R. Co., undertakes to carry you to Rameshwaram, to dip yourself into the sea and lose all worldly cares.

I have forgotten to mention the North Beach Road—an important locality, with some big banks, where they rake in all the money of the country, and spend most of their time in dictating offensive letters about overdrafts. These banks are an unsympathetic and unromantic lot doing the banking all the wrong way. After all, banks exist only to afford easy facilities to obtain money, and to accommodate at a time of pressure or need. And how do you think they do it? The other day, being completely "broke", I called on a bank and requested to have a little over-draft—not much, just a trifle, of a fifty rupees, but the unimaginative bank behaved nastily, called for a police man, and said that I had strayed away from a Lunatic Asylum, and ought to be taken back and left there. Well, that is what they call banking.

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In the same row is the General Post Office, where they deal with 'mails', and the Police court, where they deal with females also, when they offend against society, picket shops, or call the Government, names. At the farther end is the Madras Collectorate and the Income Tax Office, where are employed officers who, however persuasively you may convince them what your income is, always say that it is four times more. How many people are there not who regretfully wish that their income is as much as the tax they are compelled to cough down? This, in rough, is the geography of the city on the northern bank of the Cooum.

On its southern bank, also lies an equal stretch—the abode of the intellectual aristocracy of the Metropolis. Right on the river bank, stands our glorious University—that colossal machinery, whose quantitative output of stereotyped graduates cannot be equalled by any University in the World. May be, that, for its vigorous existence for nearly three quarters of a century, qualitatively, it has not produced one poet, one philosopher, one physicist, one chemist, one biologist, one

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inventor, or one anybody who can be said to have added a millionth share to the sum total of human knowledge, and attained internal or international fame of any importance, except perhaps a research scholar or two who establish by clinching arguments that the English interjection 'Thank God' is only a variation of the Tamil 'Thangai Odai' and that therefore the original abode of the Englishman must have been the Tamil land. May be, also, that no Madrasee within the last hundred years has produced one book, literary or otherwise, (an index of intellectual vigour and restlessness) other than such as "An English translation of the Bhagavat Gita" or "Easy courses in Chemistry for the IV Form". May be. But look at the general and average spread of culture and refinement. Go into any office, and see if you can find one clerk who is anything less than a B.A.,—good, philosophical, souls! engaged in the highly intellectual pursuit of drafting office-notes, without any sordid reflections entering in their minds that they are doing it for 30 rupees a month. And on the higher range, look at our I.C.S. men—

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those brilliant products of our University, though we have yet to know what brilliant things they do other than check jamabandi accounts. And also, look at our Orators—yes, our Orators.

The University is located in the Senate house, in a grand building with pretentious domes. Here meet the Senators and the Syndicate, settle the educational policy of the University, and approve or reject text books, particularly reject, if they happened to be good ones. Here also are held convocations twice a year, where eminent men deliver addresses exhorting the graduates, to be true to themselves, to the country, and to the best traditions of the University, which its detractors interpret as meaning "don't go against tradition, and aspire to be anything other than clerks".

Beyond the Senate House is Triplicane, a civilised variation of its original Tamil name "Tiruvallikeni". It is inhabited mostly by middling officials, (of the Secretariat, the Board of Revenue, and the Accountant-General's office), by school masters, bank

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managers, Sanskrit and Tamil Pandits, and University clerks. All the men in Triplicane are graduates, and almost all of them are cricket and tennis enthusiasts. In the mornings, after coffee, and before going to office, they meet in groups in street pials, discuss the day's news, and carry on heated arguments to settle such questions as Whether Gandhi is a saint or an impostor, and Whether the advocates of Temple-entry make asses of themselves or are really benefactors to the Hindu society. And always they disburse with great heat, and no decision. Every fourth house in Triplicane contains a racing astrologer, each a Sepharial, though none of them has yet been known to have predicted the correct horse. No one can live in Triplicane without the rest of Triplicane knowing him. The peculiar characteristic of the women of the place, particularly of the Brahmin portion, is an obstinate desire to drink well water, for the sake of piety, without regard for hygiene; and the peculiar characteristics of the men, is their intense suburban patriotism. They would never concede that there is any place healthier

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than Triplicane, and they would clout you on the head if you tell them that Mylapore is intellectually or in any other manner, superior to it. They hold the proud belief that Triplicane is the intellectual hub of the Universe.

There is a famous temple here, with a tank in front of it, with water covered green, and consequently held more sacred, into which at least four unwary pedestrians walk every month, mistaking it for a mossy lawn, get drowned, and submit to the post-mortem examination.

Farther south of Triplicane, is Mylapore, the aristocratic centre of the Metropolis, inhabited mostly by leading Advocates, and high Government officials, both in office, and in retirement.

Its atmosphere is so surcharged with law that even motor horns hoot only affidavits, appeal memos, and Latin Legal Maxims. Unlike Triplicane the women here are more advanced than men. Men are mostly Sanatanists, organise Gita lectures, Ramayana Kalakshepams, and Bhajana Goshtis. They do elaborate poojas in the morning, wear

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diamonds in the ear, Vibuthi on their face, and rudraksha or thulasi mala round the neck—at once showing worldly prosperity as well as spiritual soundness. While women wear spectacles, organise ladies' clubs, play tennis, and go about in cars, visiting friends, or lecturing in support of the Sarada Act, legislation for easy divorces, and the desirability of each family attaching an Adidravida as an honoured guest. In fact, it is a lovely, arcadian suburb, full of trees and groves, and inhabited by highbrow people of wealth, intellect, position and influence.

On the south side beyond, is the Adayar, the abode of a noble band of selfless men and women to whom India must be grateful for the enormous spiritual awakening it has given. Some of them are Trikalagnanis, and of them I am sometimes afraid. They possess the mysterious power of telling us what the world, and each particle of it, was a million years ago and what it will be a million years hence. It is not comforting to be told that I was a pig in Novoscotia thousand years ago, and a sweeper woman,

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five hundred years ago, in a village on the Danube. If I am told that I will be a Dictator of the Universe in my next birth, I may perhaps be glad. In fact, I would positively hurry to die, that I may enter into the Dictatorship without loss of even a second. Alack a day! What an elevation for a country lawyer?

I want to mention two other places, which though not strictly part of the city are yet so closely connected with it—Mambalam and Guindy. Mambalam is a recently formed suburb, peopled mostly by middling retired officials, with a hobby for gardening, and a tendency to reminisce over their official career, telling us what virtuous officials they were, and how degraded the service has now become.

Guindy is the place where races are held at stated seasons of the year. On race-days, the whole city gets empty, and congregates at the course, from H. E. the Governor of Madras down to Muniammal, the vegetable seller. A race course is the most democratic place in the world. It would be nothing surprising if a Secretary to the Government, should take

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Muniammal aside and request her to whisper in his ears, the name of the winner. And mind you, Muniammal knows the birth, up-bringing, and idiosyncrasies of every horse that runs in the race, even better than the owner himself. It is really staggering what an amount of money passes from the hands of the visitors, through the small apertures, in the ticket-selling windows.

Guindy is the bottomless sink, into which all the wealth, earned or borrowed, in the city, disappears, without leaving a trace behind.

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A VISIT TO THE HIGH COURT

Fancy took me to the High Court the other day. I had a day loose on my hand in the city, and an Advocate friend of mine said "why not come up with me to the High Court and have a look at things?" "Very well" I said.

I spent the morning in the office of my friend, lounging lazily, with three hours before me, before going to court, having nothing to do, and not caring how I passed the time. My friend was a senior in the profession—one in the top rung—reputed to possess high intellectual capacity, legal acumen, and an unimpeachable standard of professional conduct and integrity, not acquired, like some, after reaching a certain stage of stability, but possessed innately from the start. He owned a big bungalow with a beautiful name to it—full of shady trees in the front, a flowing fountain in the centre, dainty stretches of decorative gardening on all sides, and a spacious portico that could accommodate two luxurious

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cars at a time. The bungalow was a splendid building, and any one that entered it simply looked, up and down, and remarked, "This must have any day cost not less than a lakh." The office was upstairs, with a number of spacious halls and rooms. In one long room sat twenty to twenty-five juniors alongside a long wooden table, desperately working with pencil and paper, turning over leaves of innumerable law books. Five of the juniors, as in many seniors' houses, were the sons-in-law of the senior, either direct or one-removed, five others were the sons-in-law of friends, one was the son of an Accountant-General marking time in the senior's office, biding the prospect of his father jabbing him into some big job, (and was therefore treated with some consideration), and the rest ten or twelve were young men, who drifted into the office anyhow, and looked like being in various stages of acute pessimism. The juniors from seven o'clock in the morning till ten seemed to be engaged in doing nothing but emptying all the law books in the almirahs, and heaping them on the long table, while the

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"Boy" arranged them back in the day, so that the juniors might fall on them again in the evening.

In another room (screened off from the juniors') sat my friend, the senior, under an electric fan, in front of a rosewood table, with a revolving book-case on his right, containing only such books of constant reference as Acts, Codes, and Manuals. The senior never received fees through his hands. In fact, the senior, since he became one, never felt a currency note or cash, either at receiving or at spending. A junior came in, and stretched a bundle of notes: "How much is that?" asked the senior. "Six hundred." "And the balance?" "The balance of four hundred will be paid at 2 o'clock in the Court, Sir." "That is all right" said the senior, and a prosperous looking clerk in a rough-Holland coat and felt cap, standing at a respectful distance, received the notes, and vanished silently into thin air.

The junior started giving instructions, said something and read something, while the senior remained gazing absentmindedly into vacant space, as if he was contemplating the

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mysteries of the Universe. The junior stopped for a while, apparently awaiting the time when the senior might come down to earth.

"But what was the Sub-Judge's finding on plaintiff's title?" suddenly asked the senior.

"He finds in favour of plaintiff's original title but says he lost it by the adverse possession of the third defendant."

"Absurd, where does any question of adverse possession arise between mother and son living together?"

"On the point of limitation, the lower court cites a case from 42 Madras.—"

"I know that 42 Madras case. It is an absurd judgment," said the senior.

"But it seems to be on all fours."

"We will get it wiped out. That is all," said the senior, with the assurance of one who could do it if any such thing was required.

"Is there any document you want to draw my particular attention to?" queried the senior.

"Ex. L. L. which shows that the patta was transferred from the plaintiff's name to third defendant's within 12 years, and Ex. R. showing

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that she paid kist for one year within twelve years."

"Oh! that is all right, we will do our best. Thank you," said the senior.

Another junior came in with another bundle of currency notes, which the prosperous looking clerk, in rough Holland coat and felt cap, whisked away, and vanished into thin air. It looked mysterious how that wonderful clerk suddenly jumped from the blue, whenever there was a currency note anywhere within a smelling distance. He seemed able to scent currency notes even from the next country.

"Is there a chance of your case coming up to-day?" asked the senior.

"It is the fourth case in the third page, sir, and the Advocate-General is arguing the Bhimavaram appeal which is expected to take half-a-day."

"That is all right. There is no chance of the case being reached," remarked the senior.

Another junior came in with another bundle of notes. The clerk jumped out of the blue again, and carried it away in an instant.

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"The Receiver-petition will be heard to-day, sir," said the junior.

"That is all right, you may take your chance. I am not hopeful," said the senior.

"But a Receiver must be appointed sir," plaintively pleaded the junior.

"Well! let us try, that is all I can say," said the senior. And the junior departed.

As if the senior had neglected me all the time, he looked towards me and remarked, "Ba! What troublesome business?"

"You mean receiving endless currency notes? If you have no objection, I don't mind relieving you of that worry." I said. We both laughed, and my friend again went into another dose of abstraction.

In the meantime, two gentlemen with rudrakshams and vibuthis and shawls came in, started reciting Vedas of their own accord, and said that the three worlds talked of nothing but the simplicity, generosity, and philanthropy of the "Yajaman," of his genial temper, his easy approachability, and so forth, at which my friend smiled pleasantly (I don't know whether pleased with their praises, or, indulgently, at

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their simple faith that such tricks would go with a man of his knowledge of the world), called the clerk, whispered something into his ear and told the two pious gentlemen that they might kindly follow the clerk, and that he had told him. The pious gentlemen seemed pleased with the attention paid by the clerk, when they came back to take leave of my friend. It looked as if they knew the world better.

At ten o'clock, the senior disappeared downstairs, requesting me to follow, for bath and food; and, for half an hour, there was nothing but bustle in the house. Bulletins issued from the interior of the house to the exterior, informing, from time to time, that the master was in his bath, that he was in his pooja, that he was just going to take his food, that he was going upstairs to dress, and so on. The cook ran hither and thither, and carried a tiffin box, the size of a cabin trunk, containing a thermos flask of hot water and half a plantain, for master's tiffin, while the chauffeur carried bagloads of books into the car. All the household servants ran from inside the house

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to the outside, and from the outside to the inside, looking busy and important.

At 10-30, about twenty of us jumped into the car. You may ask how twenty can go in an ordinary car, besides bagloads of books and a tiffin basket of the size of a cabin trunk. Well, you may not know, but Mylapore Advocates know. The senior must go in the car, because it was his car, and he should not be left behind, the sons-in-law must of course go in, I must go in, as an invited guest, and there were others, who, by having long exercised the privilege, ought to go in too.

When we arrived at the High Court, the Court compound presented the appearance of a harbour dock, on the arrival of an important mail steamer. Cars honked in front, cars honked in the rear, cars honked on the sides, and cars honked everywhere. More cars arrived, and still more cars, until the compound was a sea of cars. Loads of law books, tiffin baskets, brief bags, and various other such articles, were carried by hundreds of persons up two flights and three flights of stairs, and everything was in a state of high bustle.

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Exactly at five minutes to 10-45, the whole High Court looked like being suddenly seized with a mad impulse to run. Clients ran and Advocates ran. People came down in shoals, jumping over two steps and three steps at a time. Advocates, in booted feet and bare feet, advocates in trousers and in dhoties, advocates in shining gowns and shabby ones, advocates in lace turbans and no turbans—all ran. Advocates with work ran, and advocates with no work ran swifter. Such seniors as could not run made motions like running. One young advocate, hopping three steps at a time, overtook another young advocate in front, nudged him, smiled, and passed on hopping. Another young advocate overtook one in front, violently gripped his hands, and dragged him on into a brisker trot, while the latter screamed, "let go my hand. I am coming along." I was unconsciously seized with the general frenzy of running, and began to run also until I bumped against a middle-aged advocate, with an excess of physical matter that considerably retarded swift progression. "Why are you running?" he asked. And to

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speak the honest truth, it was only then that I wondered and asked myself, "Really, why on earth was I running?" and felt ashamed.

There seemed to be nobody there that did not run mad, except His Majesty's Judges, and the duffadars proceeding in front of them, and some fruit-selling women, who sat squating in the corridors in front of their baskets, leisurely chewing tobacco.

The courts had assembled, and I wanted to go inside one and look, but I thought that the Judges might look at me and ask me who I was. My friend assured me that the Judges had come there on more important business than looking at me and admiring me. I went in. No Judge noticed me, there was not even a flicker of an eyelid towards where I was standing. In fact some of them seemed not to exercise any organ whatsoever, except their ears, hearing the arguments of the advocates, who had already started it.

Half an hour before lunch my friend's case was taken up, and I rushed into the court. And what a glorious sight I saw! My friend was making a superb argument, putting the

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case as neatly and clearly as even a child could understand, and throwing out the facts and figures, as if he had got them by rote from his childhood, like multiplication tables, asked their Lordships to kindly turn to page 278 line 42, 'yes 2-7-8 line 42' and page 37 line 13, and answered volleys of questions by Court, asking for this fact and that. You might have struck me down with a feather. When did he prepare all these facts, I wondered? Was he studying them in any invisible blackboard in the sky while he was vacantly gazing into space in the morning, or did the junior who had prepared the case, mysteriously get into the inside of the senior, and pump out these facts, figures, pages and lines. That is the wonder with the seniors and the high fee they deserve. They know the difference between what one ought to know, and what one needn't care to know in a case.

It was tiffin time, and all the advocates scuttled back to their chambers. I thought that the tiffin time was the jolliest hour in the High Court. Each chamber swarmed with one or two seniors and twenty to twenty-five young

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advocates, in their merry moods. The senior lolled in an easy chair, while, among the younger members, one sat on the clerk's table, another sat on the typewriting machine, two or three sat on the bench, while each chair supported five, two on each arm and one in the centre. Young advocates snatched tiffins from one another's hands, and sometimes they pooled their tiffins, and distributed a sort of chow-chow to all. On a new arrival, one young man screamed "come, come, give him more tiffin, sir, for his glorious victory in the C. M. A." at which, the new arrival retorted, "Yes, give me more. I deserve it more than you fellows, who have done nothing even to get an adverse verdict." They poured out coffee into the lids of the flasks, and distributed to each, half a lid-ful. Somebody suggested that a dozen Satgiri oranges might be got, and they quarrelled over who should pay for it. One young man tried to snatch the purse from the pocket of another, while the latter gripped his pocket and cried "Here, here. Mind my shirt. You will tear it." While the senior sat benignantly smiling on the frolics of these

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young colts, perhaps pleasantly recapturing his youth. It brought a jolly lot of joy into an old heart like mine to see that the old and the young could enjoy so much mirth and fun, without in the least offending against the claims of respect and regard due to one another. I don't know whether some of these young advocates make much money, but I feel no doubt that here they make for much good health.

Did I tell you that my friend, the senior, did not eat even the half plantain, because he didn't feel like wanting it? He took a cup of hot water, and said 'thank you'! "I wouldn't care to be a senior unless a good appetite was thrown in the bargain," I said. "Oh! I would be one, without any appetite, good or bad, because a heavy fee is thrown into it," cut in a young jester, at which we all roared, the loudest to roar being my senior friend beaming genuine enjoyment.

"Look at these irreverent boys," he said, and smilingly marched away to the Court.

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FRIENDS' WIVES

I have been curious to know whether there is a single educated gentleman in South India, whose wife is not ailing from some one thing or another. I have lots of friends and acquaintances, high and low, scattered all over the Presidency, and whenever I happen to meet a friend and make inquiries of his household, the first thing I am told is that 'his wife has not been doing well for some time.' The higher the friend is in official or social scale, the more ill is the wife, and more Latin syllables go into the nomenclature of her malady. The other day, I accidentally met Mangapathi, who is now an Assistant Engineer. Mangapathi and I were at college together—rather thick. He was then a slim, wiry fellow, light as a feather, and buoyant as a football. He has since developed three chins, and more than proportionate protrusions in other portions of his body. He is as expansive as the long causeway he has been constructing across a river, and as slow in movement,

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as his contractor over his work. His weight would tilt any ordinary weighing machine, constructed by a mechanical engineer. He was standing at the head of the causeway, abusing the workmen in undignified language, and swearing at an oil-engine that wouldn't behave well, and pump out water properly. I was driving along the 'diversion' close by the side of the causeway, and I thought it was the voice of Mangapathi — of old Mangapathi, but much more deep and reverberating.

"Mangapathi, if I believe my eyes?" I said, stopping the car.

"Mangapathi, of course, what luck!" he ejaculated, embracing me with the old warmth, and an additional warmth of 270 lbs.

"What, Mangapathi? Have you been constructing bridges and buildings, or constructing your own body?" I asked in fun. I could take such liberties with him, you see, considering old times.

"Both, my friend. Both. Revile ye not at God-given flesh," he said, methodically shaking his stout fore-finger, as if he was solemnly

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reciting a text from the Bible, and burst into a laugh that sounded as if it came out of the deep sea. Even at college, he was a fellow full of funny pantomimes.

"Now. How are you and how is the family?" I enquired.

"I am all right, as you see, but my wife has not been well for sometime," he said, changing into a touch of sorrowful seriousness.

"Really? What is the matter with her?" I queried.

"Bright's disease," he said. I laughed, because I thought Mangapathi was pulling my leg. He was one up to it.

"Oh! Bright's disease. I know. What Bright suffered from was oratory, wasn't it? Why, man, most wives suffer from Bright's disease in that way. Isn't that so?" I said laughing.

" Not that Bright, you idiot. Bright's disease is something affecting the kidney," he said.

" Oh! I am sorry," I said.

His wife suffered from meningitis eight years ago, and was treated by Dr. Kees; six years ago she had nephrosis, and was treated by Dr.

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Mathews; and now for the last a year and a half, she has had Bright's disease, and is treated by the local doctor.

"Is she improving?" I asked.

"The doctor says she is improving, but my wife says she is not. I don't know," he said with some dejection in his face.

I requested him to write to me about it, and left him. Some time later, he wrote to me that he was taking her to the General Hospital, Madras.

I met Bapayya. When he was a clerk in the Treasury Department of the Collectorate, he and I lived in the same house at Guntur. His father wanted him to marry the daughter of an Advocate, but he wouldn't, and married a country girl from Palnad, telling me that a country girl was more healthy and beautiful than daughters of Advocates. Annapurni (his wife) was, without doubt, a buxom, robust, and nice-looking girl, with large eyes, full of black *anjanam* streaking beyond the ends of her eyes,—altogether a romantically charming and healthy wife. Bapayya has been posted as a Deputy Collector in one of the Southern

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Districts. We met in a second-class compartment.

"You have now become quite unapproachable, haven't you, Bapayya, being a Deputy Collector?" I chaffed. He simply laughed. He said he was drawing Rs. 600.

"You must have piled a lot of money," I suggested.

"You think so? On the contrary, I have not. Most of my salary goes to pay doctors' bills," he said.

"Quite right. It is as it should be. If you take 600 rupees every month of tax-payers' money, for sending non-defending political prisoners to jail, and levying Tirvajasti and Faslijasti believing the lies of karnams, it is proper that you should return some part of it at least into the hands of the doctor. Nemesis, Bapayya, Nemesis," I said, digging him playfully in the chest.

"But who is ill at home that you should pay such heavy doctors' bills?" I queried, changing into seriousness.

"My wife."

"Annapurni?"

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"Yes, Annapurni."

"I am very very grieved to hear that, my friend. She used to be such a healthy and robust thing that we thought she could never get ill," I said.

"And so she was."

"My wife used to envy her health. What is the matter with her now?" I queried, with genuine anxiety in my face.

"You see, it is this way. After each child-birth, she develops idiocy which lasts for six or seven months. She has had it for all the eight child-births, and recently she had her ninth, and she is having it now," he said.

"I tell you, Bapayya, being an educated man, you ought to have stopped it long ago," I reproved.

"You mean the idiocy?"

"No, the child-birth," I said, and we both laughed thinking of the impossibility I was suggesting.

I had to alight, and I left him.

Nathamuni's wife is another. Nathamuni is a District Munsif. He and I applied for a District Munsif's place; he got it, and I didn't,

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which, I consider, shows only his luck, and not that he possesses better brains for a Munsif than I, though he behaves as if he possesses all the brains of the world. But that is another matter. He was transferred in the middle of the term to an unhealthy place in distant Vizag. He saw the High Court Judge, wanting to have the transfer order cancelled on the ground of his wife's serious illness, but the High Court Judge appears to have said that, from the kind of requests he was receiving, it would seem as if there was not a single judicial officer in the Presidency, whose wife was not ill, or of delicate health, or in the family way and about to be confined at the time of transfer. He declined to reconsider the transfer order. Nathamuni has, therefore, taken three months' leave and was taking his wife to Gunasekaram.

"But what is your wife suffering from?" I asked, meeting him, on the Villupuram railway platform, on his way to Gunasekaram.

"I don't know. One doctor said it was phytogeny, another said moristitia, another

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philatalsis, and so on, but nobody could say definitely. Many said it was hysteria."

"Hysteria? That is it. It is a term of medical camouflage. It means that the doctor does not want to say he doesn't know anything about it," I said.

"But what are the symptoms like?" I queried.

"One day she makes a hell of a noise saying that her whole body is burning like flames, another day she yells of pain here, there and everywhere. Some days, she gets attacks, rheumatic like, and remains curled up in bed for days on end. Some days she walks about and looks healthy and cheerful. Strange symptoms, aren't they? I asked a Muhammedan amin of my Court, who is a manthravadi, and he says that it is sorcery, probably by some wicked defeated litigant. Another Malayali mantravadi says that some girl died forty years ago by drowning in the well of the house I had occupied, and the ghost of her has possessed my wife."

"Why did you not remove to another house?"

"I did, but the Malayali says that the ghost

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is enraged at the removal of the victim and pursues her," said Nathamuni. And this from a District Munsif!

His wife one day got inspired and shouted "take me to Gunasekaram, take me to Gunasekaram immediately," and he was taking her to Gunasekaram now.

Some days ago I received a letter from Venkatraman of Lalgudi. He writes that his wife has been laid up with fever for four months. He has heard that there was a yogi in my place who miraculously cured diseases with nothing more than viboothi, and would I come with some viboothi immediately as the case was urgent? I went.

"What do the doctors say?" I asked.

"Don't talk to me of doctors. The doctor is diagnosing the fever by the process of elimination. For ten days he waited to know whether it was malaria, and discovered it was not. He has since been trying to find out whether it was influenza, typhoid, kalaazar or what, and there are, I think, twenty other fevers to eliminate. I fear the patient cannot stand the elimination of another two," he said in rage.

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"But how could the doctor prescribe before giving a name to the fever?" I asked.

"In the meantime I suppose my wife has to die even without knowing what fever she dies of?"

"Why couldn't you show her to another doctor?"

"I did, and he says it may be tuberculosis."

"Tuberculosis? Tuberculosis of what? You know tuberculosis first took a fancy for the lungs, then it began to cultivate fancy for other parts of the body. We have tuberculosis of the face, tuberculosis of the calf muscles, tuberculosis of the toes, tuberculosis of the nail, and tuberculosis of the hair."

"Tuberculosis of the fiddle-sticks. I tell you most of these doctors are swelled-head charlatans," he broke out. Distracted people lose sense and the proper perspective of things.

"Don't be harsh on the doctors," I said. "Civilisation has produced two hundred million diseases, and the doctors are putting overtime to cope with them. They have yet patented only about two hundred. What could the

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doctors do if your wife should overshoot the number?" I consoled.

Thank God. Venkatraman's wife has escaped death by the decoction administered by an old lady eight houses off. All is well that ends well.

Ranganathan has sent his wife to Madanapalli for climatic cure, Mannar's wife has acute bronchitis, and Ramanan's wife is so distractingly bad that he has resigned himself to the worst, trusting to luck to spare her for him.

Oh! What good would it not do my heart to hear some friends say "My wife is quite all right, thank you."

I like to see people happy.

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PURPOSE IN LIFE

I don't know how you feel about it, my gentlemen and lady readers—I feel as if my purpose in life has suddenly been cut off. Doctors might ask how about your digestion. I know my digestion better than the doctors, because I do the digesting myself everyday; and I may tell you that it is in a splendid condition. The trouble, if any, is only to find enough to feed it. It is not my digestion that is at fault. My complaint is that the world has suddenly gone so dry of resourceful thinking that I don't know what to do with myself.

Through all ages, busy bodies who would not let other people alone, but needs must gratuitously take the direction of human lives into their hands, have been trying to keep us interested aud engaged by asking us to pursue this one thing or the other, thus giving us what they called 'an interest and purpose in life.' At one time we were asked to pursue God, whose Kingdom, they said, was the

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ultima thule of our existence. We pursued Him for several centuries, diligently, sincerely and eagerly, until, for want of proof, (that is how our wiseacres instruct us), we have practically decided that there is no such person in existence. One sage here, and another sage there, said that he saw Him, but it is too late in the day now to found faith merely on the integrity of the seer, against the overwhelming arguments revealed by Science. Science put into our hands wonderful facilities for the search. We flew in aeroplanes, and searched in the clouds. We dived into the fathomless ocean, and turned its bottom over. We hitched our telescopes to the Sun, Moon, Mars and Jupiter, and peered into those distant worlds. We split the atom, and minutely examined both the inside and the outside of it. And we perforated the whole earth by our excavations, and unearthed only things like the skeletons of the early mammoth, a quantity of red hair, and my grandfather's false tooth, which, in the British Museum, is now shamelessly masquerading as the tooth of the first evolved man. In fact there is no part of the Universe, which

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we have not explored, and do not know like an open book, except, till now, Mount Everest. And even Mount Everest has been captured. One may be sure that whatever Mount Everest may release from inside its bosom it certainly is not going to be God. Probably it holds nothing more than a brace of polar bears, making winter love.

My friend Ranga, in the coldest modern logic, put the lid on the argument the other day, by saying that, if God really existed, Hollywood would long ago have captured the Gentleman, put Him on the screen, and shown Him to us at the rate of 6d. per seat, or its equivalent in the money of other countries. There is nothing that Hollywood has not captured. It has caught thunder, and it has caught lightning. How could God have escaped Hollywood? And when the great writer said that 'God was a sensation in the pit of the stomach,' nobody said it was profanity and many said it was the truth. None like the moderns to discover truth! None like them for infallible arguments!

Most of us would be open athiests, only some

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fashion still says that we must be believers; and we cling to it, as to many another convention. The game is long past, my dear readers, of keeping us engaged in the search for God.

The Poets then took us, and asked us to engage ourselves in discovering 'tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, and sermons in stones.' They doped us with such words as Beauty and Love. They asked us to drink nature by the gallons. They talked of the music of the spheres, of the 'twinkling, twinkling little stars,' of crystal lakes and azure skies, and they asked us to believe that they were rescuing us from the despair of life's realities, by transporting us into the exquisite realms of emotion, romance and incredible happiness. They asked us to grow sentimental over the nightingale, 'that light-winged Dryad of the trees' who 'sang of summer in full-throated ease,' of the ploughman 'homeward plodding his weary way,' of the 'lowing herd winding slowly over the lea,' and of 'the birds that trilled their even songs.' I have not seen a nightingale in my life, nor ever heard it sing. And really what does a nightingale sing like?

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If it is anything so sweet as Keats tells us, why hasn't our gramophone company given us a sample in a yellow or blue label record, with a picture of the nightingale on the top? And again of what practical use are these poetical intoxications to us? When a creditor comes and speaks hard words to you, is it of any help to tell him in the language of the poet that 'All the world is a stage, and the creditor and you are only actors,' or repeat 'Tell me not in mournful numbers, life is but an empty dream,' or to remind him that it is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle and the rest of it? My granny! How we have been befooled by these poets. The modern youth expressed the correct attitude towards poets when, in answer to the question of the Insurance Company, whether there was any insanity in the family, wrote 'None, except that my father sometimes wrote poetry" Poetry is a fade-out. We have discovered that a few grains of opium, or a stiff dose of Johnnie Walker would do the trick, and make you sentimental even to the lamp-post. I don't know that a man with the whole poetry of the

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world inside his brain, can soften so much to a lamp-post, see such loveliness in it, and refuse to be detached from it, as the man with a little Johnnie Walker inside his stomach.

The scientists then came in, and as much as said that, in our attitude towards life, we had all been a pack of fools. They dusted the cobwebs off our brains, brought us down from the clouds, and turned us from eating lotus. The philosophy was evolved that the purpose in life is to enjoy the utmost ease and comfort of the flesh, by harnessing Nature to cater to our creature comforts. And they made wonderful, in fact miraculous inventions, towards that end, as we all know. Just imagine, before these inventions if you suffered, say, from cough, you had to send for a doctor, and the chances were that you had coughed your existence out, before the doctor arrived. But now, you had merely to ring up Harley Street through the Trunk line.

"That Sir George Greenwood?"

"Yes."

"Speaking from Triplicane, Madras, South India, Asia."

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"Yes, how can I serve you?"

"I have a bad cough."

"Have you? Please cough, let me see," and you cough through the telephone.

"H-m" grunts Sir George Greenwood, from his Harley Street consulting room.

"Please put out your tongue," and you put out your tongue, while Sir George Greenwood peers into the television set.

"Rather bad. Who is your chemist?"

"Smitherson Bros. Esplanade, Madras, South India, Asia."

"I have phoned the prescription to them. You will get the medicine in a minute. Eight guineas."

And within four minutes of the first appearance of your cough, and before you have instructed your bankers to despatch eight guineas, you have taken the medicine, and shook yourself off—I mean shook your cough off. And that is that now.

And because for the fulfilment of this purpose in life money was most necessary, that was made the most and only absorbing pursuit in life for man, and we have been asked to get

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money—and get it anyhow. We have since breathlessly chased money. Japan chased China's money, England chased India's money, America chased the world's money, cashier chased bank's money, lawyer chased client's money, Dharmakartha chased God's money, and everybody chased everybody else's money, until there is now no money anywhere in the world to chase. Is there money anywhere now? For the last one week, I have been asking a hundred people to lend me five rupees, and everyone says 'no money.' I shall believe that there is money in the world, if any of you will send me rupees five by the next post. (You may deduct M. O. commission out of it).

I thought of applying to America for a loan of a fiver, but newspaper reports of the state of affairs on that side of the Atlantic are not encouraging. Everybody says that my neighbour has a large hoard inside his secret vault. Perhaps he has, perhaps he has not, but the money is no good either to him or to anybody else. He may have a lot of money, but he has more dyspepsia (I believe that is what

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Doctors call it when a man denies himself even the minimum food to sustain life). And as for anybody else getting at it, I don't know that their is any man living who knows the combination that would open the safe.

I tell you there is no money anywhere in the world. Money is as dead as my grandfather. There is nothing for us now to do? And what are the directors of our lives going to tell us to pursue next?

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A SON ON HAND

I have a son, and feel doubtful whether he is a blessing to me, now that the time has arrived to decide what I am going to do about him. I have several sons—God be merciful—and daughters also. Daughters, thank God, are not so much of a bother now-a-days as sons. Some how we pass off daughters, and we are not now bothered so hard, as there is an appreciable fall in the price of bridegrooms. We can now get B. A. bridegrooms merely on vague promises of getting them employment. In any event, we can marry the daughter next year (or two or three years hence), or according to our convenience, and we can without opprobrium, laugh any man in the face, who wants to disparage us for keeping an aged daughter.

But sons hang loose on our fingers, and if one has two or three—all B.A.s, the trouble is to earn enough to pay their cigarette bills, with the number of cigarettes they smoke too in a day.

I have several sons, but except the one I am

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referring to, the others do not come in for much immediate trouble, because they are yet in the spanking stage, and are easily satisfied if I give them each a blazer coat, a badminton racket and a cycle. No boy will now consent to read for the S. S. L. C. unless he is purchased a cycle (let parents know), and I think the request is modest and convenient too. For one thing, he seldom stays at home to ask you for anything else. You have usually to ask your wife whether the son is alive.

But a B.A. son is not easy to satisfy, nor easy to get rid of. My son has been a B.A. for two years, though he ought to have been that six years ago, and if you want to see him, he is in the next room. Yes, the one from where you get the smell of Gold Flake. He is puffing in the face of Edgar Wallace in appreciation of a clever detective fiction of his. He has had 4 iddilies and sambar, 2 puries and potatoes, and one and a half cups of coffee in the morning, in the local restaurant, because his mother does not know to prepare them to taste, has had a grouse with the washerman, because he washed

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his shirts limp, and has now settled down in sheer ennui over Edgar Wallace, with a tin of cigarettes on the table, and a match box on the lap. You cannot meet him in the day, because it is his sleeping time, and in the evening you can meet him only at the club, yes, that is the one who plays tennis in flannel trousers, and a polo collar shirt, with a cigarette between his lips. Don't fear, he can manage any tricky ball without coughing of smoke. In the night, you may meet him at the Cinema or a dramatic theatre.

He ambled through school in his own gait, which was none too swift. In the first year, he was not selected for the S. S. L. C., of which, I was in a way glad, because the examination-fee which the Head Master had collected in advance would be refunded to me. But in two days, both the refunded examination-fee and my son were missing. My wife was in tears, and wouldn't believe me when I protested that I told nothing to the boy. "In your time you must have failed in your examinations" she sniffed, betwixt sobs (which was only too true, but why should that be raked

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up now?) "and why should you be hard on the boy now?"

I inserted a paragraph in the papers offering a reward to any one who would bring back to me, my son "Sundaram, 5 feet, cropped head, moderate complexion, also called Kannu (eye) by his mother." In a few days, half a dozen boys were brought to me (I believe after having been severely thrashed for escaping from their homes) and though each of them looked like my son from a distance, my wife on closer inspection, declared that he was not 'our Kannu.' (All boys now look very much alike, as English girls do). All the same, they were the boys whom other parents missed similarly, and it did my heart good to restore them to their parents. (Parents must be careful about their sons when Examination results are announced). My wife cried inconsolably, saying that 'dear Kannu' need pass no examination if he would only be alive.

He was alive, and came home after ten days, and told his mother that he had gone to Malabar to engage a magician, who was reputed to have the power of inflicting paralysis on

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any Head-Master that did not select a boy for the examination. My wife declared that the Head Master would be served right, but unfortunately, the Head-Master did not come by his deserts.

In the second year, my son snapped his fingers and told his mother that it was not in the power of any Head-Master in the world to stop a second-year boy from sitting for the examination. He had acquired an indefeasible right.

He passed the S. S. L. C. in the third year, and when the result was announced, he went and sat in the pials of each of the neighbours, expecting to be congratulated, told them if he did not pass who could, and when asked what he was going to do next, said "Arts course, of course."

He went into the city and took the Arts course, and was in no hurry to leave it either. He discovered that the Madras city was a cross-section of Paradise, looked upon the Universe with rose-tinted glasses, and came to believe that life was a grand succession of sweet songs, ice-creams, fruit salads and Island

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ground Carnivals. I lay content with making interminable remittances, while the dear son was assiduously cultivating the art of making money fade away without leaving anything behind to tell the tale, and learning a lot of habits that could do no man any good. I sometimes mildly protested to my wife, but she retorted that, by all the laws of nature, there must have been a time when I was of his age, and she had no doubt that I had then cut my own capers which could not have been of any excusable variety. She said that I must then have been a pretty, rollicky young blade myself, and 'don't be hard on the poor child.' Well.

My son has come home—a B.A., for two years, sadder for obvious reasons, but not much wiser in the matter of habits. As a parent, I realise well enough my duty to provide some occupation for him, but what could the best of parents do in these days? A friend of mine suggested 'why not bring him up to your profession?' I am a lawyer, if you don't know already, and I hope you will sympathise with me. Bless my soul! One generation of a

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lawyer is enough to take off the self-respect of seven generations above and seven generations below. Have you ever prayed in court for extension of time to pay batta for fresh summons or filing sale papers and encumbrance certificate? I have, and always had a fancy to snap-shot a lawyer praying for it, while the Judge sternly asks, 'What have you done these twenty-five days?' and send the photograph to a comic paper with the letter-press, "Tail between the legs." You need not be carried away by the sight of trim youthful lawyers going out for a walk in the evenings, in seemingly careless ease, in a white shirt, with an upper cloth running crosswise over it, neatly folded to show the lace up, and with a walking stick in their hands? They are lawyers who have not yet lost the hope of filing a vakalat some day, God being merciful. The profession is a noble one alright, or so we say, but there were days for it. Most people now get only the kicks, while a few gather the ha'pennies, some only submit to the disciplinary jurisdiction of His Lordship the Chief Justice and four puisne Judges, while a few

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corner all the money and preach professional ethics. My son a lawyer ! No, sir, it is enough I am one.

I tried to make him a school-master, but no management would take him unless he was a trained man, and the Training College would not take him unless he had served in some school and was recommended by the management. I had a District Board President for a very dear friend. He promised to help me. But each member who helped his Presidentship with a vote had two candidates apiece, and my friendship could not prevail against votes that could move ' no confidence ' in a fury any day.

I tried in the Income Tax Office. I was told there were six vacancies on Rs. 35. I learnt that one was as nearly as given to a man who had got a recommendation from Sir Samuel Hoare, another was to be given to some distant relation of the Maharajah of Donagar, and for the four vacancies, I was assured that my son's case will be considered on its merits along with the 4932 applications now awaiting consideration. By the bye, ' Did my son know Shorthand, Type-writing, Book-keeping, Com-

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mercial Correspondence, Banking, Higher Mathematics and Hydrostatics? Did my son know the mechanism of the aeroplane and the wireless? What were my son's complexes and reactions?' I never knew till then that a clerkship in an Income Tax Office required such complicated knowledge for its efficient discharge.

I knocked at every door that looked like an office premises. But my son stood hanging on my fingers until a week ago.

I am glad to say that, in the end, I have got a happy news to communicate. By a stroke of genius, my son had suddenly burst into a celebrity. You saw in the papers last week the picture of a youth standing by the side of a cycle with a knapsack tied to the rod, and by his side another youth with the same outfit. Well, the first is my son, and the latter, an opposite house B. A. by name Srinivasan. They are touring India on cycle!

"Don't be uneasy father, I shall remit to you all the amounts presented to me from place to place, except what I require for my bare sustenance," he said in loving affection.

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" Thank you, my son, I am so happy you have after all found a profession, and one that carries with it name, fame, and money," I said.

And my wife said, " I knew dear Kannu will one day be great. God bless him ! "

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3sh. 6d.

When the scientist told me that the materials, of which I am composed, are in the aggregate, worth 3sh. 6d., I thought he was intent on murder. It is murder whether one stabs with a knife, or kills by a shock. 3sh. 6d? 3sh. 6d? Holy blazes and snakes! 3sh. 6d? And including the God who is said to reside within me?

It looks as if scientists are out to insult Man, to prick his pride, and to tell brutal things to his face. Only the other day Darwin told us some things, calculated to humiliate us, and encourage monkeys into coming and kissing us on the cheeks, with the liberty of cousinship. Since then, scientists have treated us only as animals. One scientist writes: "In the beginning, we were animals, and it is as animals, with animal instincts, and animal intuitions that we have evolved into what we now are." 'There is nothing transcendental about the genus homo.' Our civilisation is only a superficial varnish. 'Pride in this acquir-

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ed *panache* has given us swelled heads.' And even as animals 'it must not be imagined that superiorities are all on our side.' Now, how do you like that? Can anything be more insulting?

Do you fully realise the implications of this theory, and the logical consequences it has led to? Theologians have told us that we were once angels, and that we 'fell' by eating the forbidden fruit. Milton has written a great epic on the Fall of Man. The scientists now tell us that we were animals, and have fallen from their intuitive mode of living, and that the laws that should govern us are 'the laws of the hunter and the sportsman, not the soft laws of the French Chef, the hotbath and the Rolls-Royce.' The scientists are now writing another epic. When there is an error in your vision and you go to an oculist, or your tooth aches and you want to see a dentist, the abstract scientist twits you, and says 'Now, do you see what a mess you have made of your life? Have you ever known a dog wanting to consult an oculist, or a cat visiting the dentist?' Animals are held up to us as examples of correct living.

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In nothing is the theory so devastatingly tyrannical as in the matter of eating. Scientists are now preaching a crusade against all forms of cooked food, and especially so, after the discovery of vitamins. One writer says 'of all man's inventions the cooking stove is the most diabolical.' In the whole creation man is the only animal who cooks his food; and he is the only animal always infested with diseases. Cooking destroys all vitamins in the food, and is the proximate cause of all 'deficiency diseases.' 'It is obvious that Nature intended us to eat our food in its raw state, otherwise she would not have ordained that culinary process should deprive our food of vitamins.' Take a lesson from the animals, and eat your food raw. That is what it has come to. Now how would you like your wife serving you, in a silver plate quarter of a measure of raw, unhusked, unboiled rice, four raw brinjals, three raw onions, and four raw potatoes, for your breakfast? You may improve your vitamin contents, but you will have ruined your temper. Of what avail is imbibing all the vitamins of the world,

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if you and your wife should be biting each other through life? I would rather be a degraded animal than a nasty husband. Why should we be deprived of our sweet *Jilobi*, the Sunday onion *sambar*, the delicious *pulav*, and all the dainty delicacies that restaurant-keepers every day supply us? Because animals don't eat them?

The scientists, again, in contrast to the animals, accuse us of overeating. They say we are gluttonous. 'If we look at the behaviour of animals when they are indisposed, we cannot fail to notice that they resolutely turn from food of all kinds until they are practically well again. Our behaviour in similar circumstances is the exact opposite of theirs.' And the following terrible indictment is made. "The opinion which seems to be held by the vast majority of the people is that a man owes it to himself and his family, as a sacred duty, to eat as much as he can, whenever he can, and if any one dares to suggest the contrary, he is regarded as a dangerous lunatic. Both the danger and the lunacy reside in the present practices." The scientist strikes into a

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sarcastic vein of humour, on the Englishman's breakfast. 'Its foundations are laid in porridge, it is battlemented with bacon and eggs and bread and butter; its minarets are of marmalade—in all a mortal gorge, which should move any moderate man to exempt his stomach from any further ordeal for twenty-four hours. But no sooner is this disposed of, than the stomach is given a whole hamlet to subdue, in the shape of a meat-potato-pudding-cheese luncheon, and drawing a veil over that terrible tea, the day's work terminates with a heavy engagement with a curious agglomeration of pied and pickled indigestibles, to be followed in due course by somnolence, insomnia, and nightmare.'

But it is when it comes to flesh food that he delivers 'the most unkindest cut of all.' Meat foods must be eaten raw, like the Esquimeaux, and the aphorism is quoted, that 'he, and he only, who hunts his game is entitled to eat it.' And as for man's canine teeth, it is said 'The teeth were provided for the purpose of tearing flesh, but it was not dead flesh that they were intended to tear, but living flesh.' As much

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as to say, that you must bite the pig in the morning, if you want bacon, and dig your teeth deep into a goat's flesh if you want mutton. And if you yearn for hare's flesh, you must run after it in the jungle, and mangle it with your teeth.

How much further are they going to carry this 'animal theory?'

Dogs bark, and asses bray, to keep themselves fit. Man has no characteristic noise of his own, except making a parliamentary speech. The scientists would therefore next tell us that each man, in view of his physical fitness, should bark or bray for half an hour three times a day, dawn, noon, and evening. Scout 'cubs' only do it now. Doctors have already asked us to yawn, as often as possible, and to laugh boisterously for at least twenty minutes every day. England and America are noted for their club-forming habit, they have Mustard Clubs, for eating mustard, they have Froth-blowers' Clubs, Sun-bathers' Clubs, Mud-bathers' Clubs, and Channel-swimmers' Clubs. They would now form 'Barking Clubs' and 'Braying Clubs.' The whole of

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England will be barking for half an hour in the morning, and the whole of America braying. And India will be doing both, because it must do as England and America do. In the noon, if they are engaged, say, as in Court work, the Judge will rise as he now does for lunch. The Judge will go into his room, and bark for half an hour, the lawyers will go into their chambers, and bray for half an hour, and the clients will go into the waiting shed, and bark and bray for half an hour, and then they will all assemble in Court and get on cheerily with the work, as they now do after a good lunch. (Even now some lawyers bray, and some Judges bark). Please, my dear readers, don't imagine that I am extravagantly grotesque. Not at all. The world now does more fantastic things. You need not read even the letter-press. It is enough if you look at the pictures published in the papers, or witness a topical screen in any cinema.

I hope you realise the logical consequences of the 'animal theory.' Give a dog a bad name and hang it. Call a man, essentially, an animal, and you must ask him to eat raw brinjals, tear raw flesh, and bark.

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As if this is not indignity enough, we are now told that a man or woman's value, according to his or her material content, is only 3sh. 6d. The saying is that an elephant is any day worth a thousand, alive or dead. And man is 3sh. 6d. Perhaps Chesterton may be worth a little more, and I may be worth a little less. And in these days of all-round low prices, man is perhaps worth very much less. But who wants this information? What can be the idea behind broadcasting it, except to insult man, humiliate him, and knock out his pride? I ask, is the knowledge of any use to anybody? If I put a 3sh. 6d. in a slot, is there any scientist who can hand me a wife, when I want one? I think it is purposeless bad manners.

But I would use it. If I read in the papers, two columns of refusive flattery on the wealth and brilliance of a publicist's speech in the Gokhale Hall, I won't be consumed with envy. I will put out my lip, and say, 'after all 3sh. 6d.' If I find an Executive Councillor, lolling luxuriously in his stately saloon, I won't look upon him with awe. He is 3sh. 6d. If my

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next door neighbour puts on airs, on the score of his wealth, I will tell him 'Don't cock up your head so high, old son, 3sh. 6d.'

All the same, whatever you do, don't say 3sh. 6d. to Bernard Shaw. You will hear such a bark in your room, that not the lustiest member of the Barking Club can make.

He has a pride, and nobody can knock it out of him, for all that he is worth only 3sh. 6d.

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